

POLS 1101: Introduction to American Government

Instructor: Karson Pennington Ray

University of Georgia, Fall 2024

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 11:00 am – 12:00 pm

Office: Baldwin Hall 101W

Class Hours: T/Th 9:35 – 10:50 am

Classroom: Sanford Hall 313

Course Description

Introduction to American Government examines fundamentals of the American government, including the philosophical and constitutional foundations, political institutions and main actors, such as Congress and the presidency, democratic practices such as voting, political participation, and civil rights and liberties. It also includes a closer look at the State of Georgia, its constitution, and political system.

Required Materials

- Jillson, Cal. 2023. *American Government: Political Development and Institutional Change*. Routledge. 12th Edition. ISBN-10: 1032293969; ISBN-13: 978-1032293967. Can be purchased through Amazon. Online textbook use is permitted.
- Additional readings will be available on ELC weekly.

Course Objectives

Successful students should be able to:

1. Understand the origins and workings of American government.
2. Analyze American government and consider democratic ideals.
3. Develop a working knowledge of current events in American politics.
4. Improve critical thinking and communication skills by considering various political perspectives, reflecting on the development of personal views, and communicating those views effectively and respectfully.
5. Think about how democracy situates American government and what it means to be an active participant within our political system.

Course Structure

Class Structure

This course is designed to introduce you to American Politics in a generalized way. The abundance and intensity of readings is meant to challenge you; I do not expect you to have a full and complete understanding of the readings before class. What I do expect is for you to come to class with questions, and to leave with a more complete knowledge of the different aspects of American government.

Grades

- **Exams** will be administered three times during the semester. These exams will be comprised of multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, short answer (2-3 sentences), and essay questions. These exams will not be cumulative. You will have the entirety of the class to take the exam (1 hour and 15 minutes). The dates of each exam are listed in the schedule, but are subject to change dependent upon our pace throughout the semester. **Makeup exams are only permitted in extraordinary circumstances such as documented medical emergencies.**
- **Attendance** will be taken each day of in-person class, sometimes through activities. You are allotted **two excused absences, no questions asked.** After this, you will need to provide documentation for any days of class missed. A quick tip for success in this course: attending lectures will greatly increase your ability to do well! While I will be summarizing the readings and posting the lecture slides online after class, there is a lot of information to cover in this course...much of which may only be relayed through my lectures. If you have concerns about the attendance policy, please feel free to speak with me during office hours or before/after class.
- The **Choose Your Own Adventure Activity** allows you the opportunity to choose the way in which you engage with American government. There will be many options from which to choose! You will need to complete enough assignments to fulfill the 15-point (equates to the 15% of your total grade) requirement. Some options will be worth 15 points, some will be worth 10 points, and some will be worth 5 points. For example: you may complete one 15-point assignment, or three 5 point assignments, or one 10 point assignment AND one 5 point assignment to fulfill the activity requirements. The nature of the activities and correlating rubrics will be available on ELC and throughout classroom discussions. You may even have the opportunity to complete these assignments in class, if you so choose!
- **Position Papers** will be due five times throughout the semester, meaning that each short paper is worth 3% of your final grade. The intention of these papers is to challenge you to form your own opinions about relevant topics in American government. A rubric is available on ELC and the due dates for each paper are within the syllabus and on ELC. The most important aspect of these papers is to be able to justify your position, whatever it may be, with appropriate, peer-reviewed research.
- A **Final Project** will be due in place of a final exam or paper. The Final Project is due on December 10th by 11:59 pm on ELC.

Grading Summary

I reserve the right to curve the scale dependent on overall class scores at the end of the semester. Your final grade will count these assessments using the following proportions:

- 45% of your grade will be determined by 3 in-class exams (15% each).
- 20% of your grade will be the Final Project.
- 15% of your grade will be the Position Papers (3% each, 5 short papers total).
- 15% of your grade will be your "Choose Your Own Adventure" Activity (or activities).
- 5% of your grade will be determined by attendance and participation.

A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	88-89
B	84-87
B-	80-83
C+	78-79
C	74-77
C-	70-73
D+	68-69
D	64-67
D-	60-63
F	< 60

Class Policies

During Class

I absolutely understand that using laptops to record notes is important, so computers will be allowed in my classroom, as long as the use of these devices does not disturb the learning capability of other students. If laptops are discovered to be used for any other purpose than academics, pertaining to this course, then the privilege of electronic devices will be taken away. I aim to respectfully allow each student the same learning capability, which could be hindered by the use of electronic devices. Phones will not be allowed during class time, except in case of emergency. Eating and drinking are permitted, so long as we can respect our classroom and allow for regular class to be conducted.

Attendance Policy

As mentioned above, attendance will be taken every day of in-person class (excluding exam dates), and this will account for 5% of your grade. You will be allotted two excused absences, no questions asked. After these two absences have been utilized, you will need to provide documentation for your absences. Excused absences will include those with legitimate documentation, which can be sent to my email up to 7 days after the absence.

Policies on Incomplete Grades and Late Assignments

I will accept incomplete or late assignments when a legitimate excuse is provided. This requires documentation, and notice as soon as possible. I am flexible and understanding, but I must be aware of your circumstances to be able to accept incomplete or late work. Incomplete work without an excuse will be graded as such, and late work without an excuse is subject to a 10% reduction in overall grade for every business day after the deadline.

Academic Integrity and Honesty

Please see UGA's extensive policies on academic honesty (<http://honesty.uga.edu>). Be aware that under no circumstances will cheating, plagiarism, or other forms of academic dishonesty be tolerated in this class.

Policy on the Use of Artificial Intelligence

Please familiarize yourself with the university's position on artificial intelligence: "Unless explicitly stated, artificial intelligence-based technologies, such as ChatGPT, must not be used to generate responses for student assignments. Use of artificial intelligence or word mixing software to complete assignments is considered unauthorized assistance in this course. We encourage you to use AI tools to explore the field and help you study. However, you must take full

responsibility for any AI-generated materials you incorporate in your course products. Information must be verified, ideas must still be attributed, and facts must be true.”

Mental Health and Wellness at UGA

If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact Student Care and Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774 or visit <https://sco.uga.edu>. They will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services. UGA has several resources for a student seeking mental health services (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) or crisis support (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies>). If you need help managing stress anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit BeWellUGA (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) for a list of FREE workshops, classes, mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center.

Disability Accommodations

If you anticipate needing classroom or exam accommodations due to the impact of a disability or medical condition, you must register for services with the Disability Resource Center (DRC). I will accommodate requests from the DRC in this course. Additional information can be found here: <http://drc.uga.edu/>

Prohibition on Class Recordings and Distribution of Course Materials

Please do not take audio or video recordings of course lectures or discussions (live or Zoom) or repost any course materials (recorded, links, written) without my express permission. Doing so violates my and the University of Georgia’s intellectual property and the privacy of your fellow classmates as protected under federal and state law.

Schedule and Weekly Learning Goals

The schedule is tentative and subject to change. The learning goals expressed in the syllabus above should be viewed as the key concepts you should grasp after each week. Readings should be completed and analyzed prior to Tuesday of each week.

(Week 1) 8/15: Introduction

- SKIM Jillson Chapter 1

(Week 2) 8/20 and 8/22: Revolution and Constitution

- Jillson, Chapter 2

(Week 3) 8/27 and 8/29: Constitution and Federalism

- Jillson, Chapters 2 and 3
- DUE on 8/29 at 11:59 pm on ELC: Position Paper #1

(Week 4) 9/3 and 9/5: Federalism and Public Opinion

- Jillson, Chapters 3 and 4

(Week 5) 9/10 and 9/12: Mass Media and Interest Groups

- Jillson, Chapters 5 and 6
- DUE on 9/12 at 11:59 pm on ELC: Position Paper #2

(Week 6) 9/17 and 9/19: Exam 1 and Political Parties

- Jillson, Chapter 7 (not on Exam 1; on Exam 2)
- Exam 1 review on 9/17 in class if time allows.
- Exam 1 on 9/19 in class.

(Week 7) 9/24 and 9/26: Political Parties and Voting

- Jillson, Chapter 7 continued
- Jillson, Chapter 8

(Week 8) 10/1 and 10/3: Congress

- Jillson, Chapter 9
- DUE on 10/3 at 11:59 pm on ELC: Position Paper #3

(Week 9) 10/8 and 10/10: Presidency

- Jillson, Chapter 10

(Week 10) 10/15 and 10/17: Courts

- Jillson, Chapter 12
- DUE on 10/17 at 11:59 pm on ELC: Position Paper #4

(Week 11) 10/22 and 10/24: Exam 2 and Bureaucracy

- Jillson, Chapter 11 (not on Exam 2; on Exam 3)
- Exam 2 review on 10/22 in class if time allows.
- Exam 2 on 10/24 in class.

(Week 12) 10/29 and 10/31: Georgia Politics

- Jillson, Chapter 11 continued
- GA Politics readings TBD on ELC.
- Recommended reading: start Jillson, Chapters 13 and 14.

(Week 13) 11/5 and 11/7: Election Week

- November 5th is Election Day–no class and go vote!
- Jillson, Chapters 13 and 14

(Week 14) 11/12 and 11/14: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

- Jillson, Chapters 13 and 14
- DUE on 11/14 at 11:59 pm on ELC: Position Paper #5

(Week 15) 11/19 and 11/21: Wrap-Up and Exam 3

- Exam 3 review on 11/19 in class if time allows.
- Exam 3 on 11/21 in class.

(Week 16) 11/26: Last Day of Class and Happy Thanksgiving!

- Jillson, Chapters 15 and 16
- **FINAL PROJECT DUE ON DECEMBER 10TH.** Submit on ELC by 11:59 pm.

Friday class schedule in effect on December 3rd (no class meeting for us)

Reading Day is December 4th

Final exam period is December 5th-11th

Assignment	Due Date
Position Paper #1	August 29
Position Paper #2	September 12
Exam 1	September 19
Position Paper #3	October 3
Position Paper #4	October 17
Exam 2	October 24
Position Paper #5	November 14
Exam 3	November 21
Adventure Activities	December 1
Final Project	December 10